

### **What is a Unit Plan?**

A Unit Plan is made of a coherent set of lessons that focus on a central concept or idea. At the root of a Unit is often an Essential Question. At the following website you can find information of what an essential question is:

<http://www.authenticeducation.org/bigideas/article.lasso?artId=53>

An example of an essential question that I have used in the past is, “*What does it mean when two varying quantities are proportional to each other?*”

Some metaphors that may help conceptualize a Unit Plan:

1. Think of a Unit Plan as a spider web. At the center of the web you find the essential question. In the first concentric circle you find the specific objectives that belong to this essential question. In the second concentric circles you find the concepts associated with each objective, and in the third concentric circle you find the specific skills and procedures associated with the various concepts. In the fourth concentric circle you find activities that will support a path back to the center of the web, and in the last concentric circle you will find a set of formal and informal, formative, and summative assessments that help you make sure that path back to the center was successful.
2. A Unit Plan is like a good story. It grabs your attention right away. It has a context and a set of characters that you get to know. There is the promise of a plot and by sticking with the story you feel you will be able to get to the resolution of that plot. It keeps you interested and challenges your thinking in new ways. The story has a beginning, middle, and an end. After you read the story you want to tell it to everyone you know, it was that good. A Unit Plan is not about factoring, for example but rather about polynomial functions. If you look at the graphs from linear to quadratic, to degree three, etc., what is the story in the graphs?

### **What is a good structure for a Unit Plan?**

You might think of your Unit Plan as a “larger” lesson. It should consist of 8-10 lessons (not necessarily each equal to an instructional period) and be completed in approximately 3 weeks. One or two lessons LAUNCH (get to know the characters and the setting, pose a challenge) the Unit. Here the students get a thorough idea of what they will be studying, and become familiar what is expected of them upon completion of the unit (i.e. how they will specifically address the essential question you pose for the unit). The next 6-7 lessons students EXPLORE (figure out the landscape) the concepts and skills associated with the unit through activities. Here I expect you use the Launch Explore Summarize inquiry method of instruction. In the last 2-3 lessons you SUMMARIZE (figure out the plot) the topic. Here you lead the students back to the essential question and provide opportunities to pull their thinking together coherently (We get back to the center of the web). Along the way you have assessments that help you and the students gauge how things are going. For these assessments please think beyond quizzes and tests. In

EDC371 you should have learned a great variety of assessment practices, such as performance assessment, checklists, self-assessment, and so on.

I will post an outstanding example of a unit plan on Sakai.

### **Implementing your Unit Plan (assuming you can)**

There are two time frames in which you can teach a Unit in your MS placement. Either in the three weeks in February before the winter break or in the three weeks after the winter break (first three weeks in March. Note that you will be changing to your HS placement on March 21). I think it is less ideal if you teach your unit with the winter break in the middle of it. However, you should discuss this with your cooperating teacher. If you have an opportunity to implement your Unit Plan in the high school, then make sure you do not have the winter and/or spring break in the middle of it.

The hardest part of this process is to come to a topic. The sooner you start thinking about it and the sooner you discuss this with your cooperating teacher, the more likely it is that you will produce a quality unit that can be successfully implemented and promotes significant student learning.

My suggestion is to plan backwards from the assignment due date and think about how much time you would need to actually put the unit together. Then let your cooperating teacher know by when you would need to know the topic. Next put together an outline and discuss this with me before you start writing the whole thing. I have put an example of an exemplary Unit Plan on Sakai so you have a better idea what it takes to significantly exceed the standard for a Unit Plan. This standard is articulated for the entire School of Education in the rubric that belongs to the assignment. This is the rubric I will use for scoring your final submission.